

## Koning Dingane se woonhut by Mgungundlovu

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**King Dingane's hut at Mgungundlovu.** In his well-known book published in 1836, Gardiner (1966) illustrates and describes uMgungundlovu and the dwelling of the Zulu king Dingane. This information is frequently quoted by authors and the sketches are often used as illustrations. Based on Gardiner's information, Lawton (1959) attempted to demonstrate that the remains of a specific hut floor was that of the king. In July 1990 a hut floor was found which differs from that of Gardiner but corresponds with the descriptions of three other contemporary visitors to uMgungundlovu during 1836 and 1837. In this article it is argued that the hut described by Gardiner was demolished in 1835 as a result of uMgungundlovu being enlarged and that a new hut was built elsewhere in the royal quarters. It is the archaeological remains of this hut which was recently discovered.

In sy welbekende boek wat reeds in 1836 verskyn het, beskryf en illustreer Gardiner (1966) uMgungundlovu en koning Dingane se woonhut. Hierdie beskrywing is reeds deur verskeie skrywers aangehaal en die sketse word dikwels ter illustrasie gebruik. Op grond van Gardiner se beskrywing het Lawton (1959) gepoog om die oorblyfsels van 'n spesifieke hut as die van Dingane aan te wys. In Julie 1990 is daar egter 'n hutvloer gevind wat verskil van dié van Gardiner maar ooreenstem met die beskrywings van drie ander tydgenootlike besoekers wat uMgungundlovu gedurende 1836 en 1837 besoek het. In hierdie artikel word aangetoon dat die hut wat deur Gardiner beskryf is, reeds in 1835 tot niet gemaak is vanweë die vergroting van uMgungundlovu en dat 'n nuwe hut waarvan die argeologiese oorblyfsels nou gevind is, elders in die koninklike area vir hom gebou is.

### Inleiding

uMgungundlovu (31° 16' O; 28° 26' S) was 'n militêre nedersetting (*ikhanda*) en hoofsetel van die Zulukoning, Dingane kaSenzangakhona, wat vanaf 1828 tot 1840 regeer het. Volgens Becker (1964:79) het die konstruksie van uMgungundlovu in die winter van 1829 'n aanvang geneem en is teen die einde van dieselfde jaar deur die Zulukoning en sy gevolg betrek. Hier het hy die meeste van sy tyd gedurende die volgende nege jaar deurgebring. uMgungundlovu is in Desember 1838 deur 'n brand vernietig wat tot gevolg gehad het dat die kleivloere van die hutte hard gebak het en die oorblyfsels daarvan vandag argeologies opgespoor kan word. (Figuur 1).

uMgungundlovu, soos alle ander *amakhanda*, het bestaan uit duidelik onderskeibare dele. Die belangrikste was die koninklike area (*isigodlo*) aan die hoër liggende suidekant, reg teenoor die hoofingang, waar die koning en sy vroulike gevolg gewoon het. Die *isigodlo* was verdeel in 'n swart afdeling (*isigodlo esimnyama*) en 'n wit afdeling (*isigodlo esimhlophe*) wat duidelik afgebaken en van mekaar geskei was. Die swart *isigodlo*, waarin die koning gewoon het, was sentraal geleë en het volgens aanduidings die vroulike verwante en houvroue wat die naaste aan hom was, gehuisves. Dit was die mees 'gevreese' area; vandaar die verwysing daarna as 'swart'. Hierteenoor was die wit *isigodlo* aan weerskante van die swart *isigodlo* geleë en het gestrek tot teenaan die krygerarea waarvan dit met 'n sterk heining afgeskort was. Hier het die *umndlunkulu*-meisies (wat aan die koning geskenk is, deur aangewese persone uitgesoek is, of tydens strooptogte weggevoer is en in die koninklike *isigodlo* opgeneem is) met laer sosiale aansien gewoon (Bryant 1949:473-4, 478-480; Roodt 1992:11).

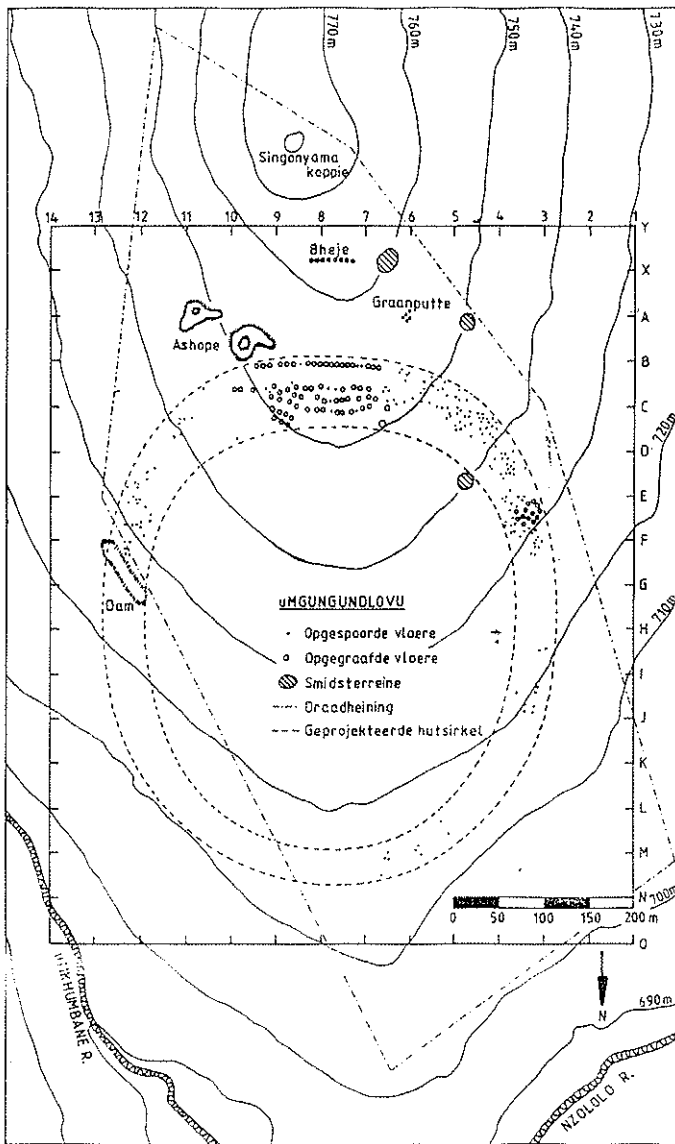
Die krygerarea (*ezigabeni*) was met 'n sentrale aslyn verdeel in twee *izinhlangoti* waar die krygers in regimente georden was (Bryant 1949:497). Die hoofman (*induna*) van elke *uhlangoti*

het aan die suidekant, direk teenaan die *isigodlo* gewoon. Hierdie area staan bekend as die *isicamelo* (Webb & Wright 1976:311, 349). Sentraal geleë in die *ikhanda* en omring met hutte, was die groot beeskraal of paradegrond bekend as die *isibaya esikhulu* waarin daar ruimte was vir kleiner beeskrale. 'n Belangrike beeskraal was die een aan die suidekant, direk teenaan die *isigodlo* waarna Bryant (1949:482) as die kalwerkraal en Stuart as die kraal vir die slagbeeste verwys (Stuart & Malcolm 1969:326). Hier het die koning gebad en belangrike rituele funksies uitgevoer. Die hutsirkel was aan die buite- en binnekant omhein met 'n dig gepakte X-vormige paalheining (Booth 1967:31).

### Gardiner se beskrywing van Dingane se hut

Tydens sy besoek aan uMgungundlovu in Julie 1835 beskryf die sendeling, Kaptein Allen Gardiner die koning se hut soos volg (Figuur 2):

This house, as may be supposed by the number of its inmates, who only occupied the circumference, is of considerable size, and was of sufficient height to stand erect even with a hat on in almost every part; but being only lighted from the low door, and the whole interior blackened by smoke, it had a most dismal and dungeonly appearance on first entering ... The frame-work was supported by three parallel rows of posts, four in the middle and three on each side. The fire-place, as is usual in all their houses, is situated about one-third of the whole diameter from the door, to which it is exactly opposite, and exhibits, for a Zoolu device, a considerable degree of taste, the raised sides being waved in the form shown in the Plate at the end, instead of the general pattern — an exact circle. The floor is remarkably even, and from being constantly rubbed and greased has quite a polished appearance. (Gardiner 1966:200).



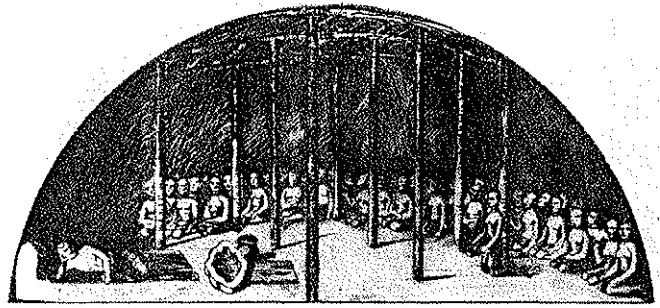
Figuur 1 Terreinplan van uMgungundlovu.

Uit hierdie beskrywing kan afgelei word dat die hut gekenmerk is deur sy grootte, die getal stupale (wat op tien bereken word) en die besondere vuurmaakplek. Verder kan daar ook afgelei word dat die hut reeds relatief oud was omdat die interieur al swart was van die rook en roet.

### Ligging van die koning se hut

Uit die bronne wat geraadpleeg is — insluitend Gardiner (1966) — kom daar een ernstige leemte na vore, naamlik die ligging van Dingane se hut binne die groter uMgungundlovu-kompleks. Die enigste bron wat inligting oor die aangeleentheid verskaf, is dié van Stuart & Malcolm (1966:325–6). Stuart het met behulp van sy informante 'n diagram opgestel, (Figuur 3) waarin hy 'n spesifieke posisie vir Dingane se hut aandui. Op die diagram word die koning se hut aan die ooste- of linkerkant, in die wit *isigodlo* geplaas. Een van Stuart se belangrikste bronne was die informant Lunguza kaMpukane (Webb en Wright 1976:339–340, 345).

Lunguza het sy vader as matdraer na uMgungundlovu vergesel (Webb & Wright 1976:304, 307, 320, 324). Sy vader was 'n gesiene man wat op bevel van die koning toegang tot



Figuur 2 Interieur van die koning se hut soos deur Gardiner in 1835 geteken. Oorgeteken uit Gardiner (1966).

die koninklike area gehad het waarheen hy by sekere geleenthede ontbied is. Hoewel hy erken dat hy weinig kennis gehad het van die binnewerking van die *isigodlo* (wat waarskynlik die rede was waarom hy die hut in die wit *isigodlo* geplaas het), is dit van belang dat Lunguza getuig dat die hut waarin hy gegaan het, altyd dieselfde een was, en dat dit groot, mooi gebou, en hoog was. In hierdie hut het hy gewoonlik ongeveer dertig *umndlunkulu*-meisies en die koning aangetref (Webb & Wright 1976:320–1, 339, 345).

Lunguza se beskrywing en veral die getal mense teenwoordig in die hut, vergelyk goed met dié van Gardiner. Op die oog af wil dit voorkom of dit dieselfde hut is wat Gardiner in Julie 1835 gesien en beskryf het. Indien hierdie aanname aanvaar word en dus ook die ligging van die hut soos op Stuart se diagram aangedui is, kom 'n mens egter voor 'n wesenlike probleem te staan, naamlik dat uMgungundlovu volgens Gardiner in 1835 herbou en vergroot is.

### Die vergroting van uMgungundlovu

Afgesien van 'n eenvoudige skets deur Andrew Smith in 1834 (Kirby 1955:53), is die *ikhanda* eers in 1835 meer volledig deur Gardiner beskryf. Op 10 Februarie aanskou hy uMgungundlovu vir die eerste keer en beskryf dit as volg:

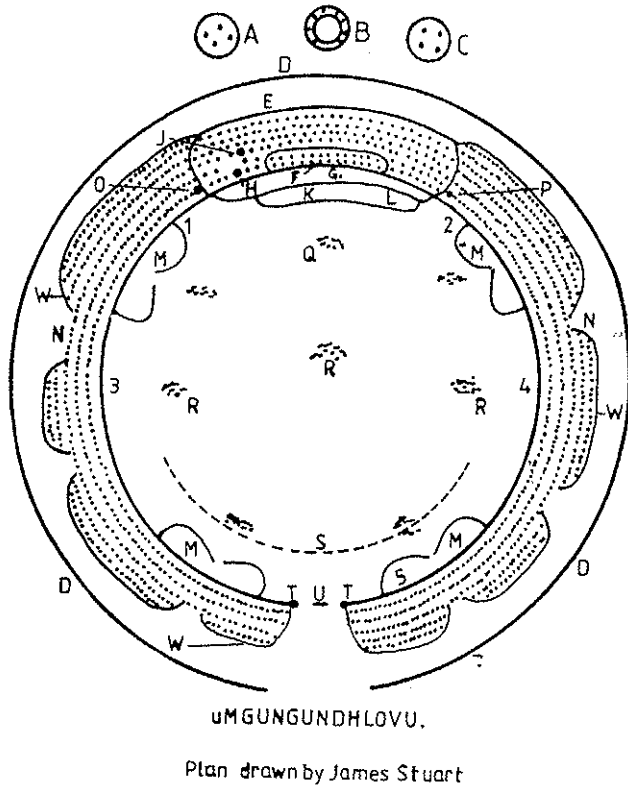
'I dismounted under a wooden knoll, whence the circular fence of the town appeared like a distant race-course ...' (Gardiner 1966:28).

Van groter belang is egter dat Gardiner by hierdie geleentheid ook sy bekende skets van uMgungundlovu gemaak het — die skets wat die sogenaamde 'race-course' voorkoms uitbeeld (Figuur 4). Tydens 'n volgende besoek, etlike maande later op 8 Julie, skryf Gardiner (1966:199):

'The town, which had been rebuilt, appeared in the distance like an immense assemblage of hay-stacks, the rays of the mid-day sun shining brightly upon the newly-arranged thatch. The whole was not yet completed — numbers of women, bearing bundles of grass on their heads, were approaching from all sides, while, as we advanced towards the gate, we observed several hundreds of the amabooto (young soldiers) hastening forward in compact lines, bearing mimosa boughs for the fences.'

Twee dae later, op 10 Julie skryf hy:

'The scene here is a busy one — houses in all stages of progress ... The huts are more numerous and better built than in the former town ...'.

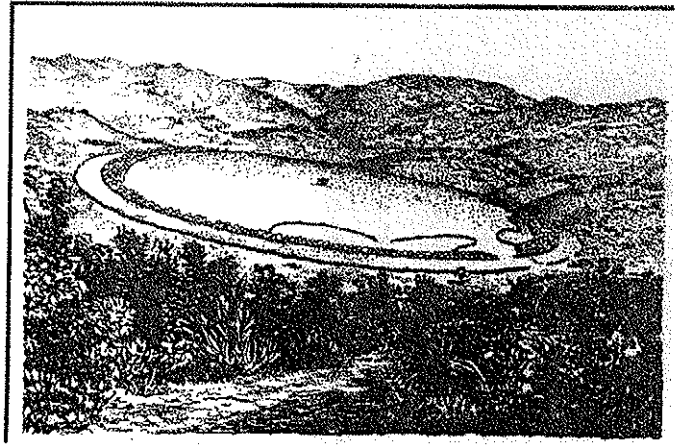


**Figuur 3** Rekonstruksie van uMgungundlovu deur James Stuart. Die ligging van die koning se hut word deur H aangedui. Oorgeteken uit Stuart & Malcolm (1969).

In 'n voetnota vir die dag se inskrywing merk hy op dat die huise (hutte) verskuif word na die oop spasie tussen die twee buitenste omheinings soos aangedui op sy skets (Figuur 4) en dat die binneste heining geheel en al verwyder word (Gardiner 1966:204).

Gardiner het sy beskrywing van die koning se hut op 9 Julie gemaak terwyl die hele proses van herbouing aan die gang was. Dit moet ook in gedagte gehou word dat die interieur reeds verswart was van die rook. Dit was dus 'n ou hut en nie een van die nuwes nie. Op 11 Julie was die koning so bedrywig met die bouery dat hy Gardiner nie te woord kon staan nie terwyl Gardiner reeds op 13 Julie vertrek het (Gardiner 1966:207, 215). Hy was dus nie 'n getuie van die bou van 'n nuwe hut vir die koning of die afbreek van die oue nie.

Bogenoemde inligting dui baie duidelik daarop dat uMgungundlovu in die loop van 1835 vergroot is. So ook is Khangela en Intontela in dieselfde jaar vergroot. Die rede hiervoor was om meer ruimte vir die koning se groeiende beeskudde te verskaf (Gardiner 1966:135, 139, 143). Hierdie feit is van deurslaggewende belang om te bepaal of die hut wat deur Gardiner as dié van die koning beskryf is, en die posisie daarvan soos aangedui op Stuart se diagram nog argeologies opspoorbaar is en of dit dieselfde hut is wat deur ander ooggetuies waargeneem is. Die preservering en argeologiese opspoorbaarheid van die hutvloere word bepaal deur die feit of die hutte afgebrand het toe die nedersetting in 1838 vernietig is.



**Figuur 4** uMgungundlovu soos deur Gardiner in 1835 geteken. Oorgeteken uit Gardiner (1966).

### Bespreking

Dit is van kardinale belang om vas te stel op watter tydstip Lunguza sy waarnemings gemaak het. Daar moet bepaal word of Lunguza dit gedurende of vóór 1835 — die jaar waarin die kompleks vergroot is — of daarna, gemaak het. Hierdie berekening kan met redelike sekerheid gemaak word aangesien dit bekend is aan watter regiment Lunguza behoort het. Lunguza vermeld dat hy aan die *Kokoti*-regiment behoort het (Webb & Wright 1976:302). Volgens Bryant (1929:645) is die lede van die betrokke regiment wat in 1838 gestig is, in 1818 gebore. Lunguza getuig verder dat hy teenwoordig was terwyl Piet Retief en sy manskappe in 1838 om die lewe gebring is sowel as by die slag van Bloedrivier op 16 Desember 1838 (Webb en Wright 1976:312, 319). Dit bevestig dat Lunguza reeds 'n volwasse man was en dat hy min of meer in 1818 gebore is. Bryant (1949:496) noem dat 'n Zoeloseun met die bereiking van puberteit op ongeveer 14 jaar oud 'n matdraer geword het. Twee jaar later het sy status verhoog waarop hy en sy ouderdomsgenote na een van die *amakhanda* verhuis het om die koning se beeste op te pas. Tydens hierdie periode was dit kenmerkend dat die seuns melk direk van die koei se uier na die mond toe gespuut het (*ukuklesa*). Lunguza meld dat hy by uMgungundlovu 'ge-kleza' het, maar dat sy ouderdomsgroep slegs 'n maand daar vertoef het voordat hulle na afgeleë gebiede gestuur is (Webb & Wright 1976:308, 329). Wanneer die seuns ongeveer 18 jaar oud is, is hulle in formele regimente verdeel. Volgens hierdie berekening was dit dus moontlik dat Lunguza in 1836 reeds tot die *Kokoti*-regiment toegedeel is. Lunguza beweer verder dat hy as lid van die *isiziba*-seksie van die *Kokoti*-regiment slegs bekend was met uMgungundlovu en daarby nie permanent daar gewoon het nie maar slegs wanneer hulle ontbied is vir 'n spesifieke taak (Webb & Wright 1976:310, 321).

Dit is belangrik om daarop te let dat Lunguza sy vader as matdraer na uMgungundlovu vergesel het waartydens hy die *isigidlo* en Dingane se hut binnegegaan het. Met Bryant se bespreking hierbo in gedagte, sou dit min of meer vanaf 1832 tot 1834/35 plaasgevind het terwyl hy as onvolwassene in die *isigidlo* toegelaat is. Hierna het Lunguza sy vader se *umuzi* verlaat en by uMgungundlovu aangemeld as een van die koning se beeswagters. Dit wil dus voorkom of Lunguza sy waarneming van die koning se hut tot en met 1835 gemaak het

en daarna nie weer sy verskyning in die *isigodlo* gemaak het nie. Hy was waarskynlik die meeste van die tyd in die veld en later as soldaat bedrywig sodat hy glad nie bewus was van Gardiner of selfs die sendeling Owen se vier maandelange verblyf by Mgungundlovu nie (Webb en Wright 1976:311). Die afleiding is dat Lunguza dieselfde hut gesien het as die een wat Gardiner beskryf het en dat dit geleë was in die posisie soos Stuart dit op sy diagram aangedui het (voordat die ou hut afgebreek is om in die nuwe vergrote uMgungundlovu herbou te word).

### Beskrywing van die koning se hut deur ander tydgenootlike besoekers

In teenstelling met Gardiner vind 'n mens uit drie ander kontemporêre bronne en in ooreenstemming met mekaar, dat 'n ander, skynbaar veel groter hut beskryf word.

Eerwaarde George Champion: Champion besoek uMgungundlovu in Januarie 1836 waartydens die geselskap ontbied word na '... what may be called his (Dingane's) hall of audience. This is an apartment somewhat in the shape of a triangle of curved lines surrounded by a fence of wattled sticks very ingeniously woven together, & seven or eight ft. high. It has 3 or 4 gates, each one being surmounted by sticks passing over the gateway parallel to each other in the shape of a semicircle, & continued down its side to the ground. The king's house stands in the centre well constructed, & very large, perhaps 20 ft. high...' (Booth 1967:33-34). Later, in April 1837, merk Champion op dat:

'He (Dingane) was stretched on his mat & wooden-pillow in his house of 22 posts which have been lately completely covered with beads of different colors' (Booth 1967:91).

Eerwaarde Francis Owen: Die sendeling Owen was sedert 10 Oktober 1837 tot 11 Februarie 1838 op permanente basis by Mgungundlovu gesetel. Op 28 Oktober meld hy dat hy moes deurbeweeg deur die *isigodlo* '... which is divided into numberless compartments, each containing about three huts ... The king's hut which is the largest of all is in a compartment by itself' (Cory 1926:56). Die koning se hut beskryf hy in November 1837 as volg:

'Dingane's hut was very warm, a fire having been kindled in it, the smoke of which had rendered his face doubly black. His house does great honour to native architecture. It is very spacious, lofty and exquisitely neat; the floor as bright as polished marble, a fire place very tastefully devised and the roof formed of sticks closely compacted together. It is far superior to the common huts, but the door is as low as any. It is supported by 21 pillars or posts which are covered from top to bottom with beads of various colours' (Cory 1926:60-61).

Piet Retief: Na afloop van sy besoek aan uMgungundlovu op 3-5 November 1837 beskryf Retief die koning se hut in 'n brief aan die Grahamstown Journal (1837.12.28:3) as volg:

'The King occupies a beautiful habitation. The form is spherical, and its diameter is twenty feet. It is supported in the interior by 22 pillars, which are entirely covered with beads. The floor is perfectly smooth, and shines like a mirror'.

Voorgenoemde drie beskrywings stem in so 'n mate ooreen dat daar sonder twyfel aanvaar kan word dat dieselfde struktuur ter sprake is. Die enigste noemenswaardige verskille is Owen se vermelding van 21 stutpale teenoor die 22 van Champion en Retief, en Retief se waarskynlike onderskatting van die deursnee van die hut.

Ter samevatting van bogenoemde inligting kan Dingane se hut as volg beskryf word: Dit was 'n groot, hoë, sferiese (koepelvormige) struktuur wat alleenstaande binne 'n omheinde area geplaas is. Die konstruksie was besonder sterk en netjies en is gestut met 22 kraalversierde stutpale. Die deuropening was dieselfde grootte as wat tradisioneel by kleiner hutte voorgekom het terwyl die vloer glad en blinkswart gepoleer is met 'n kunstig ontwerpte vuurmaakplek. Dit moet daarop gelet word dat geen vermelding gemaak word van enige ander vaste verskynsels, byvoorbeeld 'n *umsamo*, in die hut nie.

### Beskrywing van die argeologiese oorblyfsels

Gedurende die opgrawingseisoen van 1990 is die oorblyfsels van 'n vloer gevind wat ooreenstem met die beskrywing van Champion, Owen en Retief. Dit is op grond daarvan geïdentifiseer as die hut van koning Dingane (Figuur 5).

Die vloer is effens ovaalvormig met 'n deursnee op die langste as van 10,1 m en 9,1 m op die korter as. Hierdie afmetings lewer 'n totale vloeroppervlakte van 72,41 m<sup>2</sup>, waarskynlik die grootste Zuluhut wat ooit gebou is. Die vloer is erg verbrokkel maar die presiese omtrek kon bepaal word deur die oorblyfsels van groot hoeveelhede houtskoolreste afkomstig van die latte in die hutkonstruksie. Die vuurmaakplek vertoon ses 'lobbe' en het — om dit die beste te beskryf — die vorm van 'n sespuntige ster. Die middelpunt van die vuurmaakplek is 3,3 m vanaf die ingang, dit wil sê 'n afstand wat ongeveer een derde van die deursnee van die vloer beslaan — 'n reël wat deurgaans op alle vuurmaakplekke by Mgungundlovu van toepassing is. Die ingang wys teen die helling van die terrein af (ook 'n vaste reël) en is herkenbaar deur 'n breuk in die houtskooloorblyfsels van die latkonstruksie en die lyn wat gevorm word deur die middelste ry stutpale, die vuurmaakplek, en die ingang. Twee-en-twintig stutpaalgate is gevind met hout en/of houtskoolreste in 14 van die gate. Gebrande, skuimagtige oorblyfsels van glas is in of by die meeste stutpaalgate gevind. Dit word verklaar as reste van die glaskrale waarmee die pale versier was.

### Ligging van die vloeroorblyfsels

Die vloer is geleë aan die voerpunt van die hutsirkel, wes van 'n sentrale aslyn en aan die regterkant van wat waarskynlik die swart *isigodlo* was. Daar word ook aangeneem dat die hut direk langs 'n beeskraal geleë was. Indien die uitleg van die *isigodlo* bestudeer word (Figuur 6), word daar opgemerk dat die hutte aan die ooste- of linkerkant 'n simmetriese uitloper vorm — soortgelyk aan die posisie wat die koning se hut inneem. Met die bestaande inligting oor die ligging van die beeskraal aan die suidekant van die oop binneruimte, word afgelei dat die beeskraal die ruimte tussen hierdie uitlopers beslaan het.

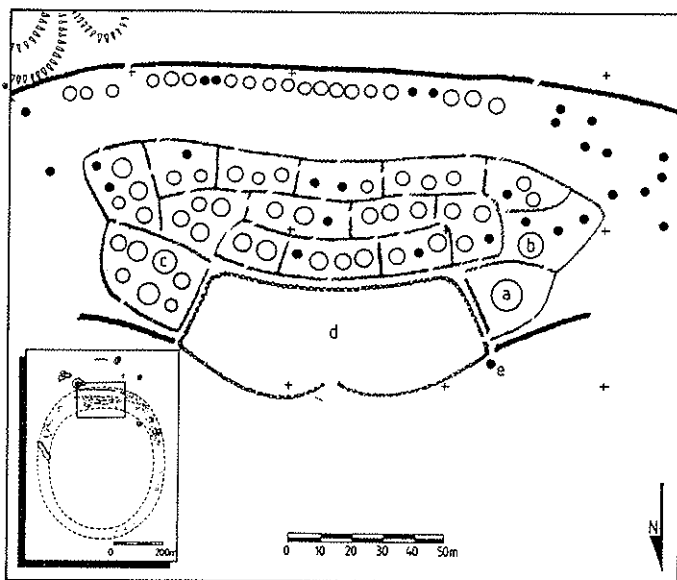
Tydens Champion se eerste besoek meld hy dat Dingane net buite sy beeskraal gesit het en dat dit ook die plek was waar hy



**Figuur 5** Argeologiese oorblyfsel van die koning se hut vloer. Let op die 22 stutpaalgate. Die stippellyn dui die omtrek van die vloer aan. Skaal: Linkerkant 425 cm; Middel 100 cm.

elke oggend gesit het om aandag aan die dag se sake te gee (Booth 1967:32). Hierdie ligging en direkte kontak met die beeskraal is belangrik ten opsigte van die magies-religieuse funksie van die koning. Figuur 6 bied verder 'n kunstenaarsvoorstelling van die ruimtelike verdeling van die swart *isigodlo* aan die hand van Champion en Owen se beskrywings.

'n Vraag wat beantwoord moet word, is of hierdie groot hut die koning se private woonhut of die koninklike ontvangshut was. Daar is wel beskrywings van ander hutte wat deur die koning gebruik is. In die periode tot en met 1835 waartydens Stuart se beskrywings geplaas word, verwys hy in sy Zuluboeke *ukulumetule* (Campbell s.j.:15) na 'n klein hut met slegs een stutpaal as die koning se private hut (*ilawu*). Hierin sou die koning geslaap en sy maaltye genuttig het. Hierbenewens meld Stuart dat daar nog 'n koninklike hut was en gaan voort om Gardiner se beskrywing weer te gee. Afgesien van sy weergawe hierbo, noem Champion (Booth 1967:39) ook 'n ander hut van die koning waar hy tydens daardie betrokke geleentheid geëet het. In sy beskrywing daarvan plaas hy die



**Figuur 6** Grondplan van rekonstruksie van die 'swart' *isigodlo* (a) Dingane se hut. (b) Hut 23. (c) Hut aangedui deur Lawton. (d) Beeskraal. (e) Waarskynlike waghut.

woord 'hut' self in aanhalingstekens: 'He (Dingane) was in his 'hut''. Hy skryf dat die hut nie so hoog was nie maar wel wyd en dat dit gestut was met nege pale. Hier word hoogte weereens beklemtoon. Daar dien op gelet te word dat sowel Lunguza as die blankes klem gelê het op die hoogte van Dingane se hut.

In geen bron (Bryant 1949, 1929; Krige 1974; Stuart & Malcolm 1969; Gardiner 1966; Cory 1926; Booth 1967; Webb & Wright se 4 volumes van die Stuart Archive), word daar spesifiek onderskeid getref tussen die koning se hut en 'n ontvangshut nie. Almal skryf deurgaans van Dingane se hut. Wat wel ter sprake is, is 'n omheinde kompartement waarin die koning se hut gestaan het en waarna Champion as die 'hall of audience' verwys maar nie na die hut self nie (Booth 1967:33; Gardiner 1966:42; Cory 1929:56). In hierdie kompartement was daar ook 'n grondhoop of platform waarop Dingane gestaan het om oor die heining te kon kyk na wat elders aangaan (Booth 1966:34; Gardiner 1966:48; Bryant 1949:474; Cory 1929:88). Dit wil dus voorkom of die goedontwikkelde gebruik van 'n ontvangshut, soos onder andere by die Venda gebruiklik is (Stayt 1969:31), nie by die Zulu in Dingane se tyd voorgekom het nie. Die grootste en mees herkenbare hut is, soos dié by die Venda, spesifiek deur die Zulukoning gebruik en bewoon en dui op sy status en aansien. Die term *ilawu* (private hut) is dus ook hier van toepassing. Dit is wel so dat hy ook ander hutte vir sekere aktiwiteite benut het. Die klein *ilawu* wat Stuart noem, is waarskynlik meer van toepassing op die pre-Shaka periode en ook soos Bryant (1949:77) dit by die hoof (*umnumzana*) van 'n gewone *umuzi* beskryf.

Geen oorblyfsels van die hut se omheining is tot dusver gevind nie. Dit is opvallend dat daar wel 'n groot spasie tussen hierdie hut en die ander nabygeleë hutte is, wat te wagte is aangesien dit alleen in 'n kompartement gestaan het. Suid van Dingane se hutvloer staan die reste van die tweede grootste hut wat tot dusver op die terrein aangetref is. Die hutvloer is deur Parkington en Cronin (1979:141, 145) as hut 23 gedokumenteer en is die grootste wat deur hulle gevind is. Afgesien van die gewone stutpaalgate, bevat dit ook 'n groot aantal ander gate wat deur hulle verklaar word as gate vir pale wat gedien het as stutte vir rakke in wat moontlik 'n wapenstoorhut was. Hulle verklaring is gegrond op die veronderstelling dat hut 23 aan die verste westelike kant van die *isigodlo* geleë is en dus naby die *induna* onder wie se beheer die wapens was, se woonplek. Tans weet ons dat die *isigodlo* veel verder moes gestrek het. Die mening dat daar rakke of stellages van een of ander aard in hut 23 was, word ondersteun, maar vanweë sy ligging word betoog dat hierdie spesifieke hut gedien het as 'n stoorhut vir die koning.

Hoewel ek huiwerig is om 'n direkte analogie tussen 'n militêre nedersetting (*ikhanda*) en 'n gewone Zulunedersetting (*umuzi*) te trek, is dit voor die hand liggend dat die *ikhanda* se vorm gebaseer is op die ronde Zulu-*umuzi*. Omdat dit 'n militêre doel gedien het, was dit uiteraard baie groter en aangepas by die spesiale omstandighede. Daarom wil ek aan die hand doen dat ook sekere elemente in die *simboliese ordening van ruimte* van die *umuzi* mettertyd na die *ikhanda* oorgedra is. Daar moet daarop gelet word dat die hut onder bespreking aan die regterkant of *ingqadi*-helfte van 'n gewone *umuzi* geleë sou wees. By die verdeling van 'n *umuzi* word die aslyn gevorm deur die *indlunkulu* (hoofhut) aan die hoër liggende kant met die beeskraal en die hoofingang aan die

onderkant. Deur vanaf die hoofingang 'opwaarts' na die *indlunkulu* te kyk, verdeel die aslyn die *umuzi* in twee helftes. Die regterkant is die *ingqadi*-seksie waaruit 'n erfopvolger aangewys kan word indien die *indlunkulu* nie een oplewer nie. Dit is gelykstaande aan die 'manlike' kant terwyl die linkerhelfte bekend staan as die *ikhohlwa*-seksie wat laer in status is en gelykstaande is aan die 'vroulike' kant. Die *ikhohlwa*-seksie het die reg om van die *umuzi* weg te breek voordat die hoof daarvan te sterwe kom (Krige 1974:42-43). Die *ikhanda* word ook deur 'n sentrale aslyn in twee helftes (*izinhlangoti*) verdeel maar dit is nie uit die literatuur bekend of die een van meer belang is as die ander nie. Dit is belangrik om in gedagte te hou dat die simboliek van die regterkant as die kant met hoër status, waarskynlik wel 'n invloed op die ligging van die koning se hut gehad het namate sy beheptheid met status en gesag toegeneem het.

### Gevolgtrekking

Die afleiding wat duidelik uit die voorgaande gemaak kan word, is dat uMgungundlovu in 1835 in sy geheel herbou en vergroot is en daarmee saam ook die koning se hut. Dit gee daartoe aanleiding dat twee verskillende hutte vir die koning in die literatuur beskryf word. Die vergroting van die kompleks het tot gevolg dat bestaande oorblyfsels van uMgungundlovu, of terreinplanne wat gebaseer is op die kartering van daardie oorblyfsels, dus nie direk verenigbaar is met Gardiner en Stuart se beskrywings van uMgungundlovu nie. Dit is 'n fout wat algemeen in die verlede begaan is. 'n Voorbeeld hiervan is Lawton (1959), wat 'n landmeterskaart van die terrein geneem het en op grond van Gardiner en Stuart se inligting, 'n spesifieke hutvloer aangewys het as dié van Dingane se hut. Hierdie vloer is min of meer waar Stuart se diagram die koning se hut aandui, met ander woorde aan die linkerkant. In sy gretigheid om dit aan te wys as die hut wat Gardiner beskryf het, het hy selfs so ver gegaan om 'n effens ingeduike deel van 'n andersins perfekte ronde vuurmaakplek as die karteling voor te hou wat Gardiner in sy skets aantoon. Hierdie vloer het wel nege stutpaalgate en kon moontlik die hut gewees het wat Champion hierbo noem (Booth 1967:39).

Die mees ondeurdragte resente beskrywing van die koning se hut is die van Saitowitz (1990:25) wat op grond van 'n enkele sekondêre bron, die stelling maak dat Dingane se hut slegs twee stutpale gehad het. Sy haal Retief aan, soos hierbo, en maak die opmerking:

'It is interesting to note the typographical error in this copy of Retief's letter (Campbell, n.d.:16.) [Die verwysing hier is die ou registernommer 1948] in which 22 had been written instead of 2. One of the digits had been crossed out on this document. This inadvertent inaccuracy could have been the source from which authors such as Champion (Bird: 1965) and Parkington and Cronin (1979: 147) were led to believe that there were 22 pillars instead of only two'.

Die Campbellmanuskrip is nie 'n oorspronklike stuk navorsing nie maar bloot uittreksels uit verskeie bronne waarin inligting oor uMgungundlovu voorkom. Die verskillende uittreksels is oorgetik en saamgebind in een manuskrip. Dit is juis hier waar die fout ingesluip het. Die manuskrip is deurspek met tikfoute wat deur iemand nagesien is maar dit is nooit oorgetik nie. Die syfer wat volgens Saitowitz deurgehaal is,

was bloot 'n tikfout naamlik '22pillars' met 'n strepie deur die tweede 2 wat as korreksie bedoel was om die '22' van die 'pillars' te skei. Verskeie ander tikfoute is op dieselfde lomp wyse gekorrigeer. Daar moet daarop gelet word dat Champion (Booth 1967) heeltemal onafhanklik van Retief sy beskrywing van uMgungundlovu gemaak het. Saitowitz gee ook nie aandag aan Owen (Cory 1929) en selfs Gardiner as bronne nie.

Ten spyte daarvan dat Gardiner en Stuart se inligting aangaande die uitleg en grootte van uMgungundlovu 'verouderd' is, is hulle werke steeds waardevolle en bruikbare kultuurhistoriese bronne. Dit verteenwoordig 'n fase in die geskiedenis van uMgungundlovu en in daardie opsig verskaf dit die volledigste inligting en illustrasies van koning Dingane en sy hoofsetel, uMgungundlovu.

### Summary

uMgungundlovu was the main seat and military headquarters of the Zulu king Dingane, who reigned from 1828 to 1840. Gardiner who visited this *ikhanda* in 1835 made a drawing of the king's hut and described it, emphasizing its size, height, the number of support posts and the specific shape of the hearth (Figure 2). Unfortunately, he does not mention its exact location within the complex. The only source indicating the hut's position is a diagram of uMgungundlovu (Figure 3) compiled by James Stuart (Stuart & Malcolm 1966; Webb & Wright 1976). Here, the king's hut is placed on the left or eastern side of the 'white' *isigodlo*. One of Stuart's main informants was Lunguza kaMpukane who accompanied his father to uMgungundlovu as a matbearer. Although he admits to not knowing much of the inner workings of the royal area (*isigodlo*), his evidence concerning the king's hut suggests that it was the same hut which Gardiner described. Because it is known to which regiment Lunguza belonged, it was possible to calculate that he made his observations of the king's hut during the period 1832 to 1834/35. Should one then accept the position of the king's hut as indicated by Stuart, one is confronted with the fact that, according to Gardiner, uMgungundlovu was enlarged and rebuilt in 1835.

Gardiner first saw uMgungundlovu in February 1835. On this occasion he made his well known drawing depicting its 'race-course' appearance (Figure 4). Later, in July, he clearly describes the town being rebuilt, stating that the huts were removed to the vacant space which appears in his sketch between the outer fences, and that the inner fence was removed altogether. This fact is essential in determining whether the hut described by Gardiner and its location as shown on Stuart's diagram, can be located archaeologically. In this respect a hut floor (Figure 5) was recently found which differs from the one described by Gardiner, but corresponds with the descriptions of three other contemporary visitors to uMgungundlovu. These were the missionaries Champion and Owen, and the Voortrekker leader Piet Retief who respectively visited the king in 1836 and 1837.

In their descriptions, they all agree on the major features of the hut and more specifically on the number of support posts, namely 21 (Owen) and 22 (Champion and Retief). Owen's probable miscount of the posts is most likely just a human error. The recently found hut floor with which this article is concerned, clearly corresponds with their descriptions rather than with that of Gardiner. It is argued that 'Gardiner's hut'

was broken down and a new hut built for the king when the *ikhanda* was enlarged. This floor is very large with a diameter of approximately 10 m. Twenty two support postholes have been identified, and the hearth is artistically designed with six lobes. The hut floor is situated in 'front' and on the right side or western extremity of what is thought to be the 'black' *isigidlo*, with access to the upper cattle enclosure and central open arena (Figure 6).

An analogy is also drawn between a military *ikhanda* and a normal Zulu *umuzi* where it is argued that certain elements of the *symbolical arrangements of space* found in the *umuzi*, in this case, the seniority of the right hand side, could have been assigned to the *ikhanda*. Therefore the king's hut was relocated to the right side. It is also argued that this hut was the king's private dwelling and not a reception hut and that its location and size was relevant to his superior status.

It is concluded that uMgungundlovu was enlarged and rebuilt in 1835. For this reason, the preserved remains found on the site, or site plans based on these remains, are not directly compatible with the descriptions of uMgungundlovu left by Gardiner and Stuart. An example of this is the mistake which Lawton had made by attempting to identify the king's hut with the aid of a site plan using Gardiner's and Stuart's descriptions. In spite of the fact that Gardiner's and Stuart's information is 'outdated' with respect to the size and layout of uMgungundlovu, their works are still valuable culture-historical sources and represent a phase in the history of the site.

### Erkenning

My dank gaan aan die Natalse Provinsiale Museumdiens en aan die Museum se opgrawingspan wat met groot opgewondenheid die vloer versigtig opgegrawe het. 'n Woord van spesiale dank aan Hester Lewis wat die veldtekening asook

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## A case of ambiguous identity — oral tradition and the Ba ga Seleka of Lephhalala

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The Ba ga Seleka live in a marginal area between the mainly Northern Sotho- and Northern Ndebele-speaking people in the Northern Transvaal on the one hand and the Tswana-speaking people in Botswana on the other. Although they are often regarded as 'Tswana' in language and culture, there is still a consciousness of identity which pertains more to a Northern Ndebele origin than a Tswana way of life. The uncertainty about the origin of their totem affiliation is discussed in this article. The oral traditions of the Ba ga Seleka served as the most important source of information to unravel their history and, in the process, it was found that they apparently adopted their totem (*phuthi*) from the Baphuthi during their sojourn in Lesotho.

Die Ba ga Seleka woon in 'n oorgangsgebied tussen die oorwegend Noord-Sotho- en Noord-Ndebelesprekendes in Noord-Transvaal aan die een kant en die Tswanasprekendes in Botswana aan die ander kant. Hoewel hulle na taal en kultuur dikwels as 'Tswana' aangedui word, is daar steeds 'n bewussyn van identiteit, wat eerder verband hou met 'n Noord-Ndebeleherkoms as 'n Tswanaleefwyse. Die onsekerheid wat daar in die literatuur oor die oorsprong van hulle totemverband bestaan, word in hierdie artikel bespreek. Deur die mondelinge oorleweringe van die Ba ga Seleka as belangrikste bron van inligting te gebruik, is hulle geskiedenis blootgelê en in die proses ook bepaal dat hulle hulle *phuthi*-totem skynbaar van die Baphuthi tydens hulle verblyf in Lesotho oorgeneem het.

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## Introduction

During the middle of the nineteenth century when the hunter-adventurer Cumming first rode into the valley of the lower reaches of the Lephhalala River, he found himself in the territory of the Ba ga Seleka. He had been hunting along the Limpopo and once more decided to move camp.

'On the first of July I inspanned at sunrise and marched to the town of the Baseleka, which I reached in about four hours, having crossed the Lephhalala on the way... Seleka's town is built on the top and sides of a steep and precipitous white quartz rock which rises abruptly, and forms a very remarkable feature in the green forest scenery which surrounds it' (Cumming 1850:143).

Cumming had heard that these people had originally come from north of the Limpopo River and his interpreters spoke to them in Tswana and he consequently constantly referred to them as 'Batswana' or 'Bechuana'.

Cumming was probably not the first, and was definitely not the last, to presume the Ba ga Seleka to be of Sotho or Tswana origin. Subsequent and supposedly much more astute and sophisticated observers, not least of whom anthropologists, have repeatedly confirmed this presumption. Although some documents as early as 1937 referred to the Ba ga Seleka as 'ama Ndebele (maTebele)' (Anonymous 1937:1) indicating a Nguni connection, others were further confused by virtue of discovering that the Ba ga Seleka venerate the *phuthi* (duiker) as their totem which is generally found among Sotho speakers. One source in fact identifies their totem as *tlou* (elephant) (Anonymous (a) n.d) which corresponds with that of other Northern Ndebele groups.

Our current research in the Lephhalala valley has revealed that documentation as regards not only the origin of the Ba ga Seleka, but also the record of their subsequent ethno-history is unclear. This article is the first in a series that intends to supplement sketchy data on not only the Ba ga Seleka, but also their upriver neighbours the Ba ga Shongwane of Villa Nora whose ethno-historical record is characterized by similar contradictions.

## Objective

As is intimated in the introduction the major goal of this article is to develop a more reliable perspective on the ethno-history of the Ba ga Seleka. More specific research problems are addressed: the potentially decisive role of the exhaustive recording of oral tradition in ethnographic research; the importance of a diachronic perspective for contemporary socio-cultural context; and rapport and reflexivity as keystones of the ethnographic exercise.

## Method

While available documents and references concerning the Ba ga Seleka were as far as possible traced and studied, the most important research strategy used was intensive interviewing. The key informants identified for the purpose included the current ruler, the regent Tompi Zachariah Seleka, his councillors, the oldest men from the area and various other individuals who were identified as, or revealed themselves to be knowledgeable as regards 'tribal history and tradition'. Directed, but open-ended interviews were conducted. Although information was gleaned in this manner from individuals, it

was found that group interviews and discussions were more productive and satisfactory. Having the gist of the collated documentary material at our disposal, the group context facilitated not only corroboration of this data with the testimonies of informants in general, but also of testimonies from different individuals. By means of the genealogical method a core genealogy of the line of descent and succession in the ruling house was compiled (cf. Bothma 1972:23) and this was used as a guideline and framework for pursuing questions on the history of the Ba ga Seleka.

Oral tradition or what the Ba ga Seleka themselves refer to as 'the history of the mouth', for them as for many people in the world, still constitutes an important available source for reconstructing the past. Care was hence taken to control the variables and to evaluate the limitations inherent in the process of recording oral tradition. We are essentially in agreement with Vansina (1972) that if an oral tradition is found to have an internal contradiction or if it is not corroborated by facts established from other sources, it should be regarded as unreliable. However, in the present study we established a number of what we shall call 'strategic confirmers' which provided constant measures of reliability.

We first visited the Lephhalala valley in 1989 as part of an archaeological survey team which, in the Ba ga Seleka area, identified and confirmed a number of earlier village sites. The next visit in the following year served as an orientation to the tribal area, settlement patterns etc., and to meet the leaders at the tribal offices, to explain our objectives and the need for the research, to get permission to work in the area and to ask for advice and co-operation. Subsequent visits not only entailed informal discussions and intensive interviewing, but also provided the opportunity to increasingly develop rapport and intentionally to create a research climate conducive to eliciting reflexive responses. Our most recent visit served the purpose of presenting a final draft of this article to key people in the area in order to provide them with the opportunity of discussing it and commenting on it. The final version thus importantly also has the blessing of the Ba ga Seleka.

## Geographical and socio-cultural context

The Ba ga Seleka live in the semi-arid Lephhalala valley near Beauty in the northwestern Transvaal and close to the Botswana border (Figure 1). Politically they are officially included in a detached part of the Mokerong district of Lebowa (De Beer 1983:173). According to Government Gazette No. 2611 of 24 December 1954 the Ba ga Seleka tribal area comprises the following farms:

- Beauty No. 919 (also known as Seleka's location);
- Rietfontein No. 624;
- Kafferskraal No. 381;
- Harry Smith No. 772;
- Olifantsdrift No. 1021 (remaining extent); and
- Witfontein No. 383 (remaining extent).

The area is sparsely populated. Apart from their Botswana neighbours across the Limpopo and the surrounding White farmers, their closest neighbours are the Ba ga Shongwane of Bobidiidi to the south near Villa Nora. The more numerous Bagananwa are a considerable distance away to the east in the Bochum district of Lebowa. Their relative isolation from people other than Tswana-speakers and a long history of



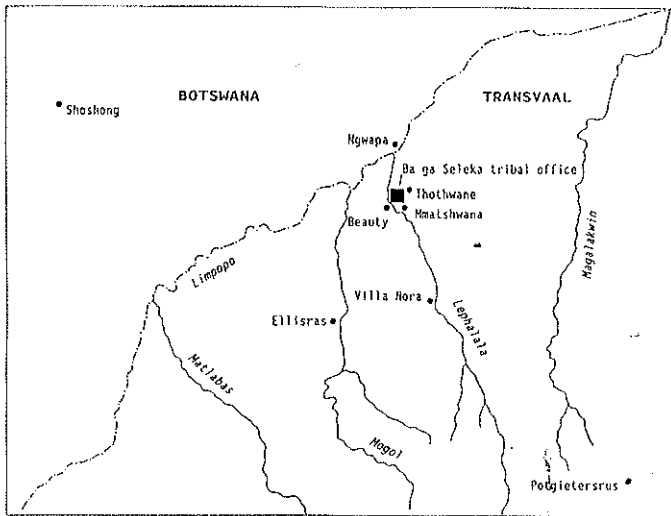


Figure 1 Geographical and socio-cultural context

periodically residing in Botswana, has much to do with their obvious Tswana socio-cultural orientation (Van Warmelo 1974:67).

As regards the White farmers of the area, the Ba ga Seleka provide an important source of labour and relations with them are good. Unsolicited information provided by our informants during the early stages of the project, emphasize that these good relations had existed for more than a century and also extended to the government of the old Zuid-Afrikaansche Republiek (ZAR) in the Transvaal. Some of the reasons for this will unfold in the ensuing account of the historical vicissitudes of the Ba ga Seleka.

In spite of the fact that the Ba ga Seleka are generally referred to as Tswana by virtue of their language and culture and because of this were 'classified' by Schapera (1976:10) as 'Eastern Tswana', it is not clear whether they have any ethnic affiliations with the Tswana. Scrutiny of the genealogy of the lineage of the ruling house of the Barolong boo-Seleka (see Molema 1987:17 and Schüler 1965:25-29) as well as their totem affiliation (see Matthews 1940:1-2) has revealed for instance that they have no ties with this branch of the Tswana.

Their Ndebele origin is however intimated in various sources (cf. Van Warmelo 1974:67; Benso 1976:14, De Beer 1983:173). Ellenberger (1937:33) in fact regarded the Ba ga Seleka as part of the original Northern Ndebele stock before it subdivided into smaller groups, e.g. 'During their stay at Lekgopung several sections of the tribe hived off. The Ba ga Mokopana were the first to go, followed by the Ba ga Laka, the Mwauna, the Ba-ga-Letwaba and the boo-Seleka'. According to the sources these major divisions, namely the Ba ga Kekana (Moletlane and Vaaltyn sections), the Ba ga Langa or Laka of Mapela and Bakenberg and the Ba ga Letwaba or Maune consisting of five tribes, today comprise the 'Northern Ndebele people' (Jackson 1969:41; Van Warmelo 1974:67; De Beer 1986:31). With the exception of the Ba ga Seleka these divisions are also mentioned by Ziervogel (1959:4-5). He suggests that the Ba ga Seleka is a branch of the Ba ga Kekana of Moletlane, but there seems to be some doubt in his mind because he neither relates them genealogically to the other major divisions of the Northern Ndebele nor does he include them in his general account of the Northern Ndebele (Ziervogel

1959:7). Further uncertainty arises about the Ba ga Seleka's true historical and kinship ties with the other groups of the Northern Ndebele when their totem allegiance (*phuthi* — duiker), which is different, is considered. The latter groups, as has already been indicated above, venerate the elephant (*tlou*) as their totem. That totem allegiance is often a pointer to the history and origin of a group is generally accepted (cf. Mönnig 1967:235; De Beer 1979:67-69; Seymour-Smith 1986:278).

From the preceding discussion it is clear that there are some 'missing links' regarding the Ba ga Seleka's position within the comprehensive Northern Ndebele context. However, there is not only some uncertainty about the Ba ga Seleka's position, but also about the unity of the Northern Ndebele as such, despite their alleged consciousness as a 'distinct ethnic grouping'. Jackson (1969:45) says in this connection that there is '... no easy solution to the apparent contradiction between the ostensible unity of the Transvaal Ndebele as demonstrated on the one hand by their genealogies and their chain of communication for ritual affairs and, on the other, by the three-way division as demonstrated by the different totems and possibly by linguistic differences'. He further suggested that only further investigation of *inter alia*, the descent groups of the Ndebele will help to clear up uncertainties about their past. Recent work by De Beer (1986) supports earlier findings on the position of Vaaltyn Kekana and the Langa of Mapela and has shed light on their ties with other Northern Ndebele groups. Some of these issues with regard to the Ba ga Seleka will be addressed subsequently.

From Kwazulu to Botswana

Mazwe (Figure 2) is generally identified as the ruler who led a group of Northern Nguni people, later to become the Ba ga Seleka, from KwaZulu in the late seventeenth century. This

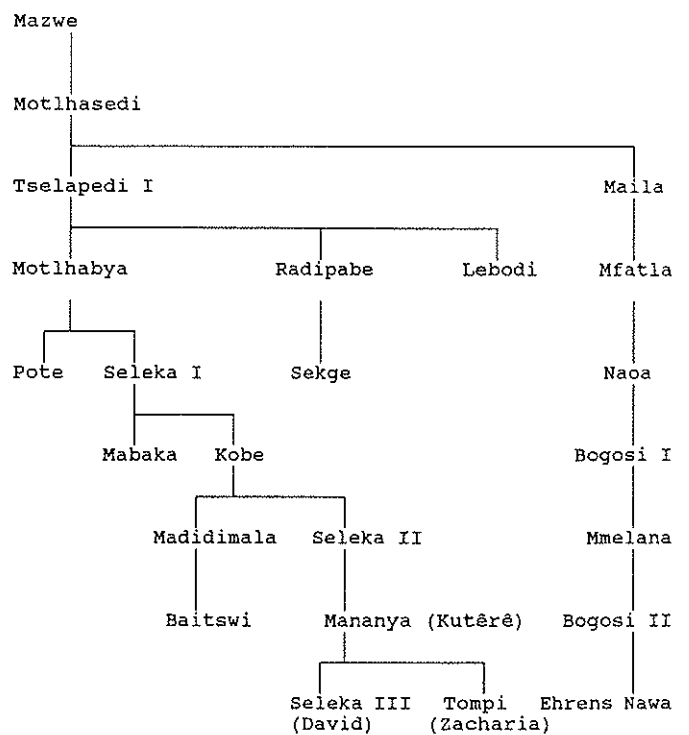


Figure 2 Core genealogy of the ruling lineage of the Ba ga Seleka.

was a period in KwaZulu when trade and environmental variables, population pressure and the formation of larger political federations caused wide-spread instability. Although the phenomenon of class or groups of people splitting off and moving away after disagreements was not uncommon, it is unclear what had affected Mazwe and his people in specific terms, but migrate they did, eventually to settle on the banks of the Phuthihatsana River on the border of what is now Lesotho. It is interesting to note that Van Warmelo (1937:58, 60) refers to the presence at that time of a 'tribe', the Phuthi, who were one of those '... who had come from the East ...', and '(i)n the Northern districts... a number of tribes known as Têbêlê ... people of Nguni extraction who settled in these parts very long ago, and have in part adopted the customs and language of their Sotho neighbours. Little more is known about them, their history also being practically unrecorded'. Whether this reference to the Ndebele also includes other Sotho groups of Ndebele origin such as the Bahlakwana and Batlhako is not clear. According to our informants it was during this period of their history and specifically their contact with the Baphuthi that the Ba ga Seleka adopted *phuthi* (duiker) as their totem which they have kept till this day and which has, *inter alia*, put their Ndebele origin and their ties with the other Northern Ndebele groups in dispute. When Mazwe died he was succeeded by his son Motlhasedi who also died during their stay in this area. It was only upon the succession of Motlhasedi's son, Tselapedi I, in what by now was late in the eighteenth or early in the nineteenth century, that the Ba ga Seleka moved again.

Tselapedi I at first took his people to an area around Witsieshoek on the banks of the Wilge River and it was during their stay here that his brother Maila left with a section of the tribe and settled at Soutpan in the Waterberg district. The line of succession from Maila went from father to son through Mfatla, Naoa, Bogosi I, Mmelana and eventually to Bogosi II. These people eventually moved to Haakdonglaagte near Rooiberg in the Warmbad district where they lived as Ehrens Nawa's subjects when van Warmelo visited them in the thirties (see van Warmelo 1935:89 and Maps 17, 18 and 19).

After a relatively brief sojourn at the Wilge River, Tselapedi I took his people across the Vaal River (Lekwa) first to Ga Mogôpa near Pretoria and then into the domain of the ruler of the Bakwena ba Phalane in the vicinity of Rustenburg. Here Tselapedi I married Sekobolo, the local ruler's daughter. When once again they migrated it was westwards across the Limpopo into Botswana where they settled amongst the Bakwena of Molepolole. Their next move was in a northerly direction to a place called Mokwena (the present Soshong) in the Gaborone district where they settled under the jurisdiction of *kgôš* Legwale of the Bakwena.

There is disagreement as to whether Tselapedi I died and was succeeded by his son, Motlhabya, while they were still living in Botswana. It is certain however that, either at the end of Tselapedi I's reign or at the beginning of that of Motlhabya, the current tribal head took a section of the tribe and migrated in an easterly direction, across the Limpopo, Matlabas, Mokolo (Mogol) and Lephala Rivers. Passing through the area now called Beauty, they also crossed the Magalakwin River eventually to build their new village near the Mmaleoko mountain and Mashashaan location situated north-east of Potgietersrust (Van Warmelo 1935: Map 17 corroborates this).

It seems likely that this move took place under Motlhabya because it is reported that the section of the tribe that stayed behind in Botswana did so under the leadership of Radipabe and Lebodi, the two brothers next in line of succession after Motlhabya. It is furthermore not unlikely that the split resulted from a disagreement between these brothers after the death of their father.

At Mmaleoko trouble soon arose between the people of Motlhabya and the Ba ga Langa (Laka) people but after several small skirmishes the Ba ga Seleka under Motlhabya eventually conquered them. Meanwhile, more or less at that time, in Botswana Radipabe and Lebodi and their followers joined *kgôš* Legwale of the local Bakwena to undertake a raid to Bonyani in the present Zimbabwe in order to seize cattle from the Shona people. In the fighting that ensued *kgôš* Legwale was killed and the raiders returned home to Mokwena. In their travels along the Limpopo, Radipabe and Lebodi had seen the Ngwapa mountain with a small river, the Talepe, running from it and upon their return to Mokwena, and having mourned the death of Legwale, they asked the Bakwena permission to leave on the pretext of wishing to search for their elder brother Motlhabya, and his people. Having obtained this permission they took their people to the mountain Ngwapa where they settled. Radipabe became ruler, subjugated a few of the smaller tribes of the region, which our informants were unable to identify, and levied taxes on them.

#### The first years on the Lephala

Motlhabya had in the meantime heard of his brothers' movements and decided to settle closer to them in the vicinity of Beauty, an area through which he had originally taken his people on their trek from Botswana. Motlhabya, however, was by this time an old man and he died during the migration to Beauty. Motlhabya was succeeded by his second son in order of rank, Seleka I. Why Pote, the one highest in rank did not succeed, is unclear. Our informants could also not shed more light on the circumstances around this succession. Having succeeded his father, Seleka I continued with the migration and settled his people at a hill called Mmatshwana, a few kilometers from Beauty and the confluence of the Lephala and Limpopo Rivers, and just south of the present-day main village of the Ba ga Seleka. On their way to Mmatshwana they had encountered the Ba ga Shongwane, later to become their southern neighbours on the Lephala, who were on their way from Shonaland in Zimbabwe to Buffelskraal in the Waterberg district. The Ba ga Seleka found the Molwantwa, a small tribe with *tau* (lion) as totem, already living in the area around Beauty and the latter as well as the Ba ga Shongwane eventually lived under the jurisdiction of Seleka I.

*Kgôš* Seleka I sent a few messengers, Ramakwadi, Sebakwa and Dinta Mmaledi to Ngwapa in Botswana to inform his *rangwane*, his father's younger brother Radipabe, that his elder brother, Motlhabya had died and that the Ba ga Seleka had settled at Beauty. It would seem that Radipabe regarded Seleka I as a possible threat to his position as tribal head for he refused to receive the messengers and had them chased away from his *mošate* (capital). Radipabe's younger brother, Lebodi, however, received and treated the messengers well, giving them karosses as gifts. Radipabe resented this act of kindness and interpreted it as contrary to his wishes and it heralded the

beginning of strife between him and Lebodi. Radipabe grasped every opportunity to give vent to his anger at Lebodi. One such incident occurred during a *kgotla* (council meeting) and involved a man called Maropeng, who must have been a young patrilineal relative of Lebodi since he called Radipabe 'grandfather' i.e. father's father.

'One day while they were at the *kgotla* Radipabe pointed out a dog and said that it was his. Maropeng said: 'This is my dog'. The men also said: 'Yes chief the dog belongs to Maropeng'. Radipabe immediately jumped up, stick in hand, and cracked Maropeng's skull with it. He fell down stone dead' (Anonymous (a) n.d.).

After this incident Lebodi went to Seleka I for help and upon hearing of his departure, Radipabe is reported to have exclaimed: 'In Ndebele we say: 'Go Basotho', go you Kxhahari people, (Anonymous (a) n.d.). Although there is some doubt as to the accuracy of the statement, it would seem to have derogatory implications and specifically emphasizes a 'we' (Ndebele, original stock) versus 'they' (those who have been influenced by Sotho-speakers) categorization. Lebodi and Seleka I decided that they needed more help against Radipabe and went to the Ba ga Kekana of Moletlane at Zebediela. The latter agreed and the combined forces eventually launched a surprise attack at the mountain of Ngwapa. They approached through the Mmametli pass under cover of darkness and killed Radipabe and his eldest son, Sekge. Most of his followers escaped, however. A saying used in praise of Seleka I (also by himself) is said to have originated by virtue of these events,

'I am Makhurumolla (sic.) (the opener) of the lid of the pot of death' (Anonymous (a) n.d.).

Seleka I was by now ( $\pm 1840$ ) an elderly man and it must have been while the Ba ga Seleka were living at Mmatshwana Hill that they were visited by the hunter Cumming (see the introduction). In spite of the fact that Mzilikazi and his horde are said to have passed through this region on their way to Bulawayo (cf. Becker 1962:181) it is only indirectly averred in the oral traditions of the Ba ga Seleka.

The last few years of Seleka I's reign were marked by instability. Skirmishes with a number of tribes took place. Battles were for example, fought against *kgosi* Ramanyoba of the Ba ga Moletse, *kgosi* Mankopane of the Ba ga Langa Ndebele (Jackson 1969:62-65) and against the tribal rulers Lebелwane and Mokaa of Botswana. Whether the Ba ga Seleka lost this battle against the Ba ga Langa Ndebele our informants cannot confirm, it may well be the case since there was a period of time in the Ba ga Seleka's history that they rendered tribute to the Langa rulers.

When Seleka I died a very old man, his second son in genealogical rank, Kobe, became the next *kgosi* because his highest ranking son Mabaka, had died in his youth. At the time when Kobe took over the reigns of the Ba ga Seleka, a number of smaller tribes were under his jurisdiction: the Ba ga Pesha (totem: *noku*, i.e. porcupine), the Ba ga Masoba (totem: *legodi*, i.e. starling), the Ba ga Mabula (totem: *kwena*, i.e. crocodile), the Ramotebele and others.

### Back to Botswana

During these years contact with Whites was few and far between. Other than hunters like Cumming, the only white person to pass through the territory of the Ba ga Seleka in the

middle of the nineteenth century was the Rev. Robert Moffat who was on his way to visit Mzilikazi in Zimbabwe. The Ba ga Seleka were at any rate not due to stay in the Lephhalala valley much longer, for in 1858 Kobe decided to take his people back to Ngwapa in Botswana. What prompted this decision is not clear, but Kobe may have been influenced by news of the skirmishes between the Boers and the Ba ga Langa of Mankopane (Jackson 1969:73) that were taking place not too far to the southeast. Boer influence was also increasingly reaching out toward the northern areas of the Transvaal (Jackson 1969:66-67) as well as to the western parts after the Boer leaders A.H. Potgieter and Piet Uys had driven the Matebele of Mzilikazi out of the Transvaal. Within a year of resettling at Ngwapa, contact with Whites, especially missionaries, became more frequent. One such group from Lesotho, intending to do mission work at Bulawayo among the Matebele, were however driven away by Lobengula and they went to the Ba ga Seleka of Kobe instead. The missionaries who counted F. Coillard, Asere Segagabane, Aaron Mojakisane and Andreas Lesodi in their number, stayed in the area for five years, upon which they returned to Lesotho in 1884. Amongst those to be converted and baptized was a son of the late Radipabe, Mosenene Mathaba. According to genealogical data Mosenene and Mathaba were two different sons of Radipabe, so the information is somewhat contradictory. However, the son who was converted was baptized Sakaio by the Rev. F. Coillard in 1884. When the missionaries left for Lesotho in 1884, Sakaio went with them to attend the Bible school at Morija. Since Morija is today the headquarters of the Evangelical Church of Lesotho which was founded by the Evangelical Missionary Society of Paris, and which established the first white settlement in Lesotho in 1833, it appears that the Rev. Coillard and his colleagues belonged to this mission (Albertyn 1975:441).

While Kobe and his people were still settled at Ngwapa, his highest ranking son, Madidimala, left in 1882 with a section of the tribe to once again cross the Limpopo and establish their village in the Waterberg. Within a few years of their return to their previous environment however, Madidimala died.

At Ngwapa where the Ba ga Seleka under Kobe and other rulers had intermittently lived in close proximity to the Bamangwato for many years, intermarriage with them not only took place regularly, but there was also friction. As regards intermarriage for example, Gorewang Khamane married Keboile, the daughter of Kobe, and Seeletso, the sister of Kgabo — Tebela Mokwena. They gave birth to Botloseng Mosenyi of Kalamari and *kgosi* Rasebolai Khamane of Serowe, a later ruler of the Bamangwato.

The early part of the Ba ga Seleka's stay at Ngwapa was in fact characterized by an absence of disagreement. The Ba ga Seleka had re-entered Botswana during Sekgoma I's reign and he gave them permission to settle at Ngwapa. Kobe or 'Spear-barb' as he was called by the Bamangwato, sent five sheep to Sekgoma as a gift of allegiance and they lived in peace for a considerable time. Kobe was, however, already an old man in Sekgoma's early years and not long after the beginning of Khama's reign started he became 'blind and decrepit' (Mockford 1931:108).